

# INFANTRY LETTERS



## SIMULATED AMMUNITION

Since my article "Ammunition: Dummy, Inert, and Simulated" appeared (INFANTRY, November-December 1987, pages 11-13), people have been asking about outfitting their entire divisions with this ammunition.

The most feasible way to do this and reduce the cost to divisions and installations is to obtain enough to outfit the largest unit that conducts external evaluations. With that amount on hand, there will be no need to outfit each soldier. Units can then request it and sign for it just as they do with MILES equipment.

The Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) is now looking at the feasibility of designating the Fort Benning Training Support Center (TSC) as proponent for small arms simulated ammunition, but approval has not been granted at this point.

If Fort Benning gets the go-ahead, the TSC will be able to provide these items to units in the field that want them. Fort Benning will have to be reimbursed, of course, by the divisions or installations obtaining them.

For further information, local TSCs should contact the Fort Benning TSC.

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## DON'T SUBDIVIDE INFANTRY

I would like to second the comments made by Major Jack Mundstock in his letter (INFANTRY, September-October 1987, page 3). He offered some excellent reasons why the Infantry branch should *not* be subdivided into separate light and mechanized branches.

As a former "straight leg" light

infantryman (in Vietnam and at Fort Hood, Texas) in the early 1970s, and more recently as an Armor officer working with mechanized infantry battalions in the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Carson, Colorado, I have gained valuable experience that leads me to the same conclusion.

Especially noteworthy was his observation that he suspected the transfer of skills from heavy to light infantry would be more difficult than the other way around. I most emphatically agree.

My tank company was often detached from its parent battalion and assigned to a mechanized infantry task force. I also frequently picked up a mechanized platoon when operating in a tank-heavy task force. In both instances I was frustrated by the mindset of the infantrymen with whom I worked. They were almost universally committed to remaining in their personnel carriers almost all of the time during field training. If they were skilled in the techniques of patrolling, conducting dismounted attacks, or clearing wooded areas by some means other than roaring through them in M113s, you could have fooled me—I rarely saw them perform these tasks.

During one movement to contact with a mechanized infantry-heavy task force, I ordered my infantry platoon leader to dismount a couple of squads and clear a woodline before I ordered the rest of the team to follow. At the after action review I was buttonholed by two of the infantry battalion's company commanders who accused me of mis-using my infantry. Both had elected to drive through the same

woodline, suffering substantial losses to RPG teams, while my team went unscathed.

The lesson in this is that the M113 and the Bradley are not replacements for fundamental infantry skills. Light fighters know this—just ask any of them who have experienced the thrill of encountering a mechanized infantry company position late on a cold winter's night (the massacre that usually follows gives the light "grunts" something to talk about over a cold brew for months). It's a lesson I hope more mechanized infantrymen will take to heart.

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## THE COLD CREAM TRICK

INFANTRY's excellent article on the "lost" art of patrolling did a good job of suggesting that perhaps we have not always retained the lessons we have so expensively learned.

In the same vein, but on an entirely different subject, I was struck by the letter from Sergeant First Class W.P. Conboy (INFANTRY, September-October 1987, page 3) on the use of Vaseline to help shape combat boots. His advice was excellent, but I think it was a case of independent discovery.

Consider the following passage from a work of fiction (*Time Enough for Love*, by Robert A. Heinlein, 1973). The scene takes place in 1917; the United States has just declared war on Germany, and a grandfather—an old soldier—is advising his grandson:

*Ted, do you know the coldcream trick? To use on your feet when you might have your shoes on for a week or more? . . .*

We welcome letters from our readers and print as many of them as we can. Sometimes it takes a while before we find room. But keep writing on topics of interest to our readers, and we'll do our best to publish your letters, sooner or later. All letters are subject to editing to fit space and other editorial requirements.

*If possible, have your feet clean and dry. Smear your feet all over and especially between your toes with cold cream. Or Vaseline, carbolated is best. Use lots, a thick layer. Then put on socks—clean if possible, dirty if you must, but don't skip them—and put your boots on. When you first stand up, it feels as if you'd stepped into a barrel of soft soap. But your feet will thank you for it and you won't get jungle rot between your toes. Or not as much.*

Now Heinlein was born in 1907 and, before his appointment to Annapolis, was an infantryman in the Kansas National Guard. It seems reasonable to assume that he had picked this up from some old soldier in Kansas or Missouri or somewhere else along the line. But it was certainly not from personal experience in Vietnam, Korea, or World War II, because after his commissioning he served all of his time in the Navy.

I find this very interesting. Makes you wonder what else we may have forgotten during the years or may now be overlooking.

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### MORE ON BOOTS

The thoughts expressed by Sergeant First Class W.P. Conboy (Retired) on the care of a soldier's feet (INFANTRY, September-October 1987, page 3) are very much on target. I too have done some walking and would like to expound on Sergeant Conboy's suggestions.

There is really no substitute for walking in wet boots to get them in form-fitting condition. But I have found that applying several generous coats of Mink Oil (allowing each to dry before the next coat) to the outside and *inside* of the boots over a period of several days is a more convenient method. At the end of this treatment, the boots can be comfortably walked into a good final fit, and the leather will last longer with better water repellency.

Reducing the friction that occurs inside the boot is the key to reducing blisters. I've discovered that, instead of applying Vaseline to the socks, two-inch wide, thin plastic, package sealing tape works well. The tape is very smooth and reduces friction considerably.

Carefully apply the tape to the inside of the boot at the back of the heel, the bottom of the heel, and the ball of the foot. The same package-sealing tape also reduces friction from the issue-type mesh insoles.

An infantryman's boots and rifle are his most important items of equipment. The former must be given as much attention as the latter. I don't know whether these suggestions will work for everyone, but they work for me.

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### MILITARY HISTORY SYMPOSIUM

The Department of History at the United States Air Force Academy will sponsor the Thirteenth Military History Symposium, 12-14 October 1988 on the topic "The Intelligence Revolution: A Historical Perspective."

For further information concerning the sessions and registration, call me at AUTOVON 259-3230; commercial (303) 472-3230, or write to me at the address shown below.

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### QUICK-FIRE

The article "Point Man Training," by Captain Scott E. Hampton (INFANTRY, July-August 1987, pages 36-37) was very good.

The quick-fire qualification exercise brought to mind a technique revealed to me by a Lieutenant Commander

Rhinehart, U.S. Navy SEAL, in Vietnam in 1968. He fixed a length of one-half-inch diameter stainless tube between his M16's front sight post and the carrying handle so as to create a "sighting plane." The hollow tubing still allowed him to use the front/rear alignment for an aimed shot, while the sighting plane gave him the same effect as looking down a shotgun barrel shooting skeet or trap. He claimed it was very effective in improving the "snap shooting" of a point man and demonstrated his own skill by "snap shooting" dinnerplate-sized plywood disks thrown into the air.

Try it. (The disk thrower should be behind a berm.)

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### UNCSF-JSA AWARDS

On 15 September 1987, soldiers of the United Nations Command Security Force-Joint Security Area (UNCSF-JSA) received not one but two Army Superior Unit Awards. No other unit in the Republic of Korea has received this award.

The first award was made by DA General Order Number 9 (dated 1 April 1987) to those soldiers who were assigned to the Joint Security Area during the period 18 September 1984 and 26 November 1984. The second award was made by DA General Order Number 30 (dated 1 July 1987) to those who were assigned during the period 15 May 1985 to 15 May 1986.

All of these soldiers may wear the award as a permanent one.

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